arglebargle!

monday, may 29, 2006

Alex Toth R.I.P.

Space Ghost
1
2 May '66
NOTE RIM HIGHLIGHT AROUND BLACK HOOD
3 May '66
WE GO with THIS ! NOTE EMBLEM, NOW on CHEST CENTER
NO BELT GADGETS NOW
FLIGHT and POWER RAY BUTTONS are NOW on METAL SLEEVES
3 per SLEEVE
Alex Toth

Though I know he had been ill for some time, to actually read the words that he has passed on still comes as a shock. The regrettable news comes to us from the official Alex Toth website. He was 78. The legendary artist/designer was born in New York City on June 25th, 1928. While his design work became well-known through association with a number of comics/animation properties spanning nearly 5 decades, a whole generation will remember him for his work with Hanna-Barbera in particular. Although I should point out that some of my favorite work of his was always 1960's *Space Angel* (which used the same snycro-vox lip-superimposing process as *Clutch Cargo*). This show had a overall design sense much closer stylistically to 1950's EC space adventure comics than H-B. The animation, what little there was, was more along the lines a pop-up book than anything else...but we loved it anyhow. However, I didn't actually start seeing *Space Angel* cartoons until I was around 10 or 11. My earliest memory of a show I made a point to watch was *Space Ghost.* Loved the Ghost, *Jonny Quest, Mightor, The Fantastic Four, the Herculoids*,---every show he designed for in the 1960's, basically --even ol' *Birdman*. Later he also worked on *Josie and the Pussycats, Super-Friends* and a TON of other shows. In fact a few years back H-B alumnus Darrell McNeil published a 360 page book featuring nothing *but* Alex's model

about me

C. Martin Croker
Atlanta, Georgia, United States

Animator, V/O Actor, Comics Artist, Archivist, Director, Collector, Writer, Historian, Painter, Packrat, Recluse, Hermit, Crank, Weirdo.

View my complete profile

links

Google News
Edit-Me
Asifa-Atlanta
Ward-o-Matic
Cartoon Brew
Strangetoons
John K.
Jim Smith
Bill Wray
Turner Studios
Dagnabit!
Sam Leyja
Dan-O Connor
Joanna Davidovich
Steve Vitale
Tony Aguirre
Blackwing diaries
Uncle Eddie's Theory corner

previous posts

the new adventures of huckleberry finn-intro(full ...
Holy old-age Batman!
KFC -- WTF???
Say it ain't MOE!
Back on the Richter Scale
Bits o' Weirdness #1
Battle of the Brothers!

sheets he did while at Hanna Barbera. (It wasn't authorized, though --so good luck finding it now.) Alex in essence, nearly single-handedly created the animated Super-hero look of the 1960's. His fans number in the millions and his artistic influence is undeniable by almost anyone who grew up in the 1960's & '70's and draws Superheroes for a living. (or even part-time, like me.)

According to a statement by on Saturday morning by Toth's oldest son Eric "My father did pass way this morning (may 27) drawing/writing at his table. I do not have any further details at this time other than I will forward an adress for those interested in sending cards. We will arrange something appropriate at or around the convention in San Diego this Summer..."

He actually went while he was working...That's our Alex. Any real artist should be so lucky.

Alex was a prolific artist who made it all seem easy and effortless. (And as someone who had to follow in his artistic footsteps and try to live up to his standards --directing the new animation on *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*-- I'm here to tell ya, it ain't!) He was a true original.

One of the greats --he'll be sorely missed.

posted by c. martin croker at 1:21 pm | 4 comments

friday, may 26, 2006

Way, Way, Way out West

I've always thought the combination of cowboys and sci-fi was a good match. (Just look at *The Valley of Gwangi*.) Jack Kirby apparently thought so too since stories appeared in some of his and Stan's old west comics that could've almost just as easily seen print in one of the same era monster titles like *Tales To Astonish.* So just for the hell of it, here's some choice covers only the King coulda thoughta!

KID COLT
OUTLAW
12¢
107
NOV.
THE MOST FANTASTIC WESTERN ADVENTURE OF ALL TIME!!
"the GIANT MONSTER of MIDNIGHT VALLEY!"
THE MONSTER IS LIFTING ME INTO THE AIR BY SOME STRANGE POWER!! I'M COMPLETELY HELPLESS!

2009 is Bustin' Loose All Over!

R. I. P. Bettie Page

Black & White in COLOR #5 : The CREATURE!

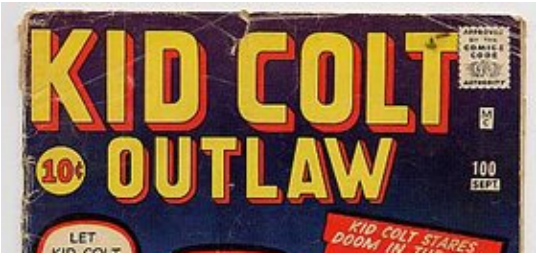
archives

April 2006
May 2006
June 2006
July 2006
August 2006
September 2006
October 2006
November 2006
December 2006
January 2007
February 2007
April 2007
June 2007
July 2007
August 2007
October 2007
November 2007
December 2007
January 2008
February 2008
June 2008
July 2008
August 2008
September 2008
November 2008
December 2008
January 2009
February 2009
March 2009
April 2009
June 2009
January 2010

I Power Blogger

RAWHIDE KID
10¢
22
DEATH-TO-THE-RAWHIDE KID!!
WHAT CAN I DO NOW? NOTHING STOPS HIM!! NOTHING!!
BEWARE THE TERRIBLE TOTEM!

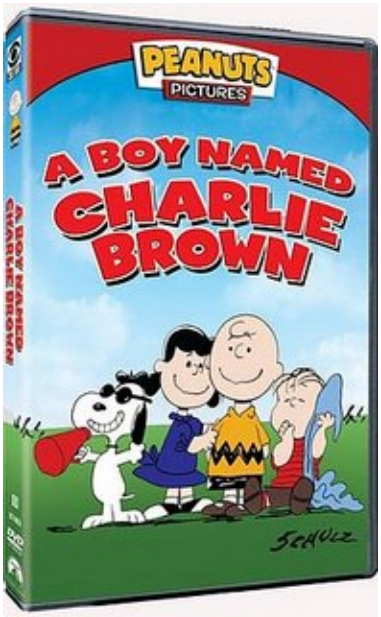
KID COLT OUTLAW
12¢
110
MAY
I KEEP FIRING, BUT MY BULLETS DON'T STOP HIM! HOW CAN I SAVE THE TOWN--AND MYSELF--FROM IRON MASK??
KID COLT IS TRAPPED BY THE MOST DANGEROUS FOE HE HAS EVER FACED!! THE UNCANNY
IRON MASK!


KID COLT OUTLAW
10¢
100
SEPT.

posted by c. martin croker at 12:13 am | 4 comments

thursday, may 25, 2006

Even Bigger Blockhead



A Boy Named Charlie Brown. The very first Peanuts movie, released in 1969.
A few years ago I bought a technicolor print of this film on 16mm off eBay. While I was inintially perturbed that the print was not in as good a shape as had been described, when I watched it and realized maybe I didn't know this movie quite as well as I thought. Charlie Brown's struggles with the kite seemed to go on a for a lot longer than I had remembered ...and I bacame more and more sure I was looking at animation that --one way or another-- I had never seen before. After the kite sequence things seemed the same as ever...Charlie loses the Ballgame ...Snoopy dreams of fighting the Red Baron (in footage clipped from the Great Pumpkin). However the next sequence opens with Charlie Brown wandering the streets dejected with filmic direction that's almost Bakshi-esque. He winds up at Lucy's Psychiatric Stand and she shows him the slides of his faults like always... But THEN she produces a football, talks him into trying to kick it, and proceeds to show Charles he's the loser of the world by replaying his vain attempt for him on closed-circuit television --in slow motion no less! Once Chuck staggers back home, stares at his piggybank and sez "These psychiatric sessions are going to bankrupt me" the movie goes back to the familiar cut --But I was stupified. I figured since nobody else I knew had ever seen these scenes either I'd eventually have to get it transferred. A lot less of a need now since THEY'RE ALL ON THE NEW DVD! Woo-Hoo! So --the excised footage *does* eventually surface after all...but completely without fanfare. *Nothing* on the DVD says "containing extra scenes bla bla

bla" But they're on here...almost 5 minutes worth! I can only assume they were cut for time because it does seem like it takes a really long time to get to the spelling bee, which is the meat of the picture. (In fact the spelling bee doesn't even come up in this version for a full 30 minutes!) I just wish I could whole-heartedly reccommend this release...Being a much nicer print that it's VHS predesessor n' all...But it does have a rather MAJOR flaw. It's "widescreen". FAKE WIDESCREEN!! --That is, Black bars slapped on the top and bottom of a TV ratio print! (AAUUGH!!) Definitely worth having for the extra scenes but a real pisser nonetheless.
Thanks anyway, You CBS Video Blockheads.

posted by c. martin croker at 6:32 pm | 3 comments

wednesday, may 24, 2006

Meet The Flintstones--Animators!

Back 10 or 15 years ago, before anyone had ever heard of a DVD, Laserdisks were at the top of the heap, technologically speaking. Every hard-core video connoisseur I knew had one--even me. It was a great time for the industry. Where else could one see every Tom and Jerry or Tex Avery Cartoon (99%) UNCUT --and in Cinemascope for the very first time--all in one place. Lots of disks were available then that will more than likely NEVER see the light of day on DVD because of changing ownership rights issues, political correctness of the day or the ever-changing demographic --*and taste* of the consumer. Here's one such case. For The Flintstone's 35th anniversary Cartoon Network in a joint effort with Spumco put out a great 4 disk box set called "THE FLINTSTONES COLLECTION" which featured the first 14 episodes uncut and a TON of extras. (I got excited to see "Flintstones Rarities" listed on the 5th season DVD that came out recently, but when I looked at it today it's just like 2 Welch's commercials) Here we're talking like an entire *side* of toys and commercials. But the BEST feature came in the form of a 24 page booklet crammed full of great 'Stones factoids by John K. and Earl Kress. Below is one of my favorites --John K.'s guide to recognizing and differentiating between the series' best animators. Enjoy!
(PS - If you can't read the type click on it twice and it should open bigger in a new window)

Meet The Stars Of The Flintstones

When I grew up, I used to watch "The Flintstones" in syndication every day and I began to notice that the characters would look different in each cartoon. I eventually figured out that they must have been drawn by different animators, each of whom had their own individual traits. Comic book nerds like me have always been able to tell the difference, say, between a Steve Ditko Spiderman and a Todd McFarlane Spiderman, but in animation, the tendency for most studios is to force all the artists to try to draw the characters the same way. This is called drawing "on model." Ed Benedict, who designed "The Flintstones," is really mad that all the animators draw the characters in their own style, or "off model." Luckily for us, Hanna-Barbera didn't have time to have the animators learn to draw the characters before they started animating!

I love cartoons where you can tell the animators apart. Bob Clampett's Warner Bros. cartoons are like this. And so are the early Hanna-Barbera cartoons. The tricky part is figuring out what names belong to what drawing and animation styles! "The Flintstones," when it runs in syndication, has a stock set of credits on the end of each episode. They list four animators. And, if the names ever agree with the persons who actually animated a particular episode, it's sheer coincidence. And get this. In the early days of Hanna-Barbera, one animator would animate a whole 25 minute cartoon by himself! So, this is what we've done for the likes of you: Henry Porch (my sound editor) and I have assembled clips of each animator's work so you can finally figure out who's who! I know that each and every one of you is licking your lips in anticipation as one of life's most succulent mysteries is about to disrobe and reveal its undergarments for you.

- John K.

Ken Muse

Ken Muse's style is easy to spot when you see it, but hard to describe in words. That's why we put the clips together! An obvious trait of his is the way he draws Fred's eye-bags. The line under his eye is parallel to it. Also, he draws upside-down smile lines. He

generally puts less new expressions and poses into his cartoons than the other animators do. He's sort of the bland one, although some of the coolest drawings ever of the Flintstones are in "The Swimming Pool." Check out Fred driving his car in the beginning of the cartoon. Or Fred lying down and staring out the window. This is before he got used to drawing the characters and began drawing "on model."

Muse worked on "Tom and Jerry" before Hanna and Barbera opened their own studio.

Don Patterson

Don Patterson is a very funny animator. He loves to do wacky walks and runs and goofy eye-takes. He never seems to repeat expressions and actions. He custom designs his work to match what's going on in the story. He draws the characters "off model" when they need to act. He sometimes gives the characters "Smurf-eyes": the two eyeball whites joined into one.

Patterson came from Walter Lantz' Studio, where he animated Woody Woodpecker and Wally Walrus and all your other favorites.

Carlo Vinci

Carlo Vinci is the master of Flintstone. He handles him clean, smooth, without shame. Here's how to spot him.

Carlo loves drawing crooked poses with the character's appendages, the head, the hands, the pelvic girdle all aiming in different directions. Keep your eyes peeled for socially unacceptable (in some circles) wrist actions. He likes to flip the wrist around -- have the hand up, then flip down, then twist around, fingers wiggling, taking turns sticking up -- it's truly a joy to watch.

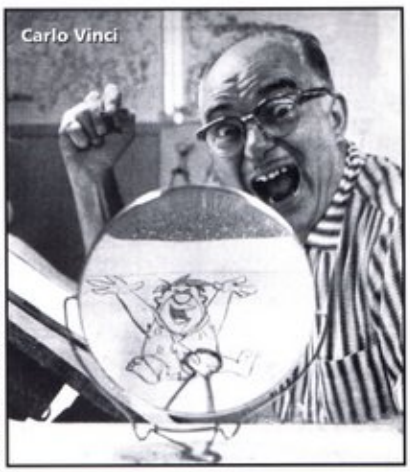
He utilizes the butt generously. Remember the old Yogi cartoons? The ones where Yogi bops up and down to bongo beats? That's Carlo. He's always thinking of you. In Carlo's hands, Fred's butt is a sensitive, emoting creature.

He also draws quite a few meaty expressions on the characters, whereas some other animators are stingy with new expressions.

Carlo came from Terrytoons, where he animated for about 30 years. He did Gandy Goose, Mighty Mouse, Heckle and Jeckle and all your favorite New York cartoons. His specialty was singing and dancing. Hey, get this! Carlo met young Joe Barbera back in the '30s at Terrytoons and taught him how to animate.

Carlo did great stuff for Terrytoons but I think he was made for Hanna-Barbera. His animation style, combined with Ed Benedict's designs, created a whole new entertainment experience.

Count on Carlo to deliver a quality package to you.



George Nicholas

Nicholas draws really well. When I was a kid I'd see his cartoons and say "there's the good artist." He's the one who draws really solid, almost 'pretty' designs. He's also great with the girls. He makes them look cute and sexy. Another Nicholas trait is he likes to have the tongue flop around in his character's mouths.

Like Carlo Vinci and Don Patterson, he custom designs new expressions and poses to fit the characters' moods according to how they feel in the context of the story at each particular instant. This is unlike many animators, who strictly draw their expressions off of the model sheets. This model sheet approach is what most cartoons use today, which is why everything looks and feels so generic now. The characters always make the same expressions, rather than act according to the situation.

Mark Kausler, the world's greatest animator, says, "Nicholas has the richest, fullest-looking dialogue animation on the early Flintstones shows. Instead of using just a straight up and down 'head bob' formula, he varies it by shaking the head 'yes' and 'no' to the mood of the dialogue accompanied by a shrugging gesture. He also uses a special 'sarcastic' head rotation in perspective for some lines. He uses a unique 'beady-eyed' expression on his characters, drawing tiny pupils in Fred's eyes when he's getting an idea or when he's hypnotized by something. He draws big, fat fingers on Fred's hands, especially in pointing gestures, like in the Frog Mouth episode."

Before Hanna-Barbera, George worked for years at Disney, where he animated for Nick Nicholas' Pluto unit.

Ed Love

Ed Love's most obvious trait is his real cool "upside-down-curly-mouths." Watch when his characters talk. The mouth is also a little bit to the side. His action style is very 'springy.' Mark Kausler says it's because he 'slows-out' of everything. That's hi-falutin' animator talk. He has a way of making limited TV animation look like full animation by the way he does his timing. It's very smooth.

Before Hanna-Barbera, Ed had a quite varied career. His first animation job was on Disney's first color cartoon -- "Flowers and Trees." He animated Mickey getting stepped on by brooms in "Sorcerers Apprentice" from "Fantasia."

He animated for Tex Avery in the early '40s on "Screwball Squirrel," "Red Hot Riding Hood" and other classic cartoons. From the mid- to late forties, he worked for Walter Lantz. He animated a Woody Woodpecker cartoon, "Drooler's Delight" completely by himself.

In the early '50s, he did commercials for Ray Patin. A really cool one was for General Mills' Corn Kix. Ed animated the Kix Man, who is made of corn balls. He animated the Trix kids before there was a Trix Rabbit. He animated some of Hanna-Barbera's best commercials from the late '50s and early '60s -- the Kellogg's cereal commercials starring Huck, Yogi, Quick Draw and all your other wonderful cartoon pals.

posted by c. martin croker at 2:04 pm | 7 comments

tuesday, may 23, 2006

Say It Ain't So, Pete!

Long before the Green Goblin had his way with Gwen Stacy, "Puny" Parker had to deal with "the most unexpected guest-villian of all!"--namely Skip --An "older boy" with white hair and er... *rather* strange sexual leanings.

Incredible as it may seem, the book was a goofy one-shot team-up put out in 1984 by a joint effort of Marvel and the National Committee for prevention on Child Abuse. A worthy cause, but Gee Whiz!! --Talk about going a long way to make a point!

Legitimized by the team of Spider-Man regulars Jim Salicrup, Jim Mooney and Mike Esposito, (Hell, *John Byrne* did the cover) our man Pete attempts to console a young boy who is really distressed because his older (and hot) babysitter came onto him(?). In his attempts to make the lad feel better he relates a tale that on first reading made my jaw hit the floor. I'm still blown away that Marvel decided to portray their top-tier character Spider-Man as a victim of sexual abuse, but nonetheless, here's the three pages that changed the web-slinger forever...

BY THE WAY, HAVEN'T I SEEN YOU AROUND HERE BEFORE? YOU'RE THE KID WHOSE NOSE IS ALWAYS BURIED IN A TEXTBOOK!
MY NAME'S STEVEN ROSENDORF, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME SKIP!
UH... HI, SKIP!
LIBRARY
WHICH WAY DO YOU LIVE IF I NEVER WALKED EINSTEIN HOME BEFORE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO, SKIP!
I HEART TO! EINSTEIN, THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP!
AND THEY DID BECOME FRIENDS!
SEE YOU TOMORROW, EINSTEIN!
THANKS SO MUCH FOR HELPING ME WITH MY SCIENCE PROJECT, SKIP!
I USED TO WORRY THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS UNTIL THAT NICE WASHCLOTH BOY CAME ALONG! HE SEEMS LIKE SUCH A FINE YOUNG MAN, ANNA!

"THE BOY AREN'T YOURS TO ACTUALLY DISCUSS ALL OF LIFE'S IMPORTANT PROBLEMS...
"SKIP'S PARENTS WERE DIVORCED, SO HE LIVED WITH HIS MOTHER WHILE SHE WAS AT WORK. THE BOYS WERE ON THEIR OWN!
THIS GLASS REPRESENTS ALL OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM! THE CUE BALL REPRESENTS THE SUN, THE OTHER BALLS ARE PLANETS, AND...
DON'T YOU EVER STOP THINKING, EINSTEIN? HEY, I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU OF SOCIO-ECONOMICS! IT'S TIME YOUR MIND GOT OFF SCIENCE!
BUT YOU'VE NEVER SEEN PICTURES LIKE THOSE IN A STUFFY TEXTBOOK!
UH, NO!
"THE YOUNGER BOY WAS SHOCKED BY WHAT HE SAW IN THAT MAGAZINE!
COME ON, EINSTEIN! LET'S CONDUCT A LITTLE EXPERIMENT OF OUR OWN! LET'S SEE IF WE CAN TOUCH EACH OTHER LIKE THE PEOPLE IN THAT MAGAZINE!
PLEASE, SKIP, DON'T! I'VE GOT TO GO NOW!
"BUT THE YOUNG BOY HAD SO MANY QUESTIONS!
"A FEW LATER, HIS AUNT AND UNCLE NOTICED THAT HE WAS NO LONGER SPENDING ANY TIME WITH SKIP AND THEY QUESTIONED HIM ABOUT IT. AFTER MUCH PERSUASION, HE SOMEHOW FOUND THE COURAGE TO TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED."
JUST LIKE YOU, HE DID THE RIGHT THING! WHEN SOMETHING YOU CAN'T HANDLE BY YOURSELF HAPPENS, YOU MUST TELL AN ADULT!
I KNOW, TONY! THAT YOUNG BOY WAS ME!

Yoof!
Though I've won several bets concerning the existence of this little tale it still staggers the minds of the unsuspecting. Don't get me started on how Mooney only drew Skip's head from like three angles at most-- and how prespective makes little sense in some panels (exactly *where* is Skip standing when they're playing pool?). Plus Skip goes from condesending wise-ass to homosexual predator with a taste for little nerdy boys in less than half a page. Also I love that despite Pete's painful confession of being buggered, ol' Uncle Ben never puts down his paper. (And such a *nice* couch, too --ick.) But like I said... I won't go into it.

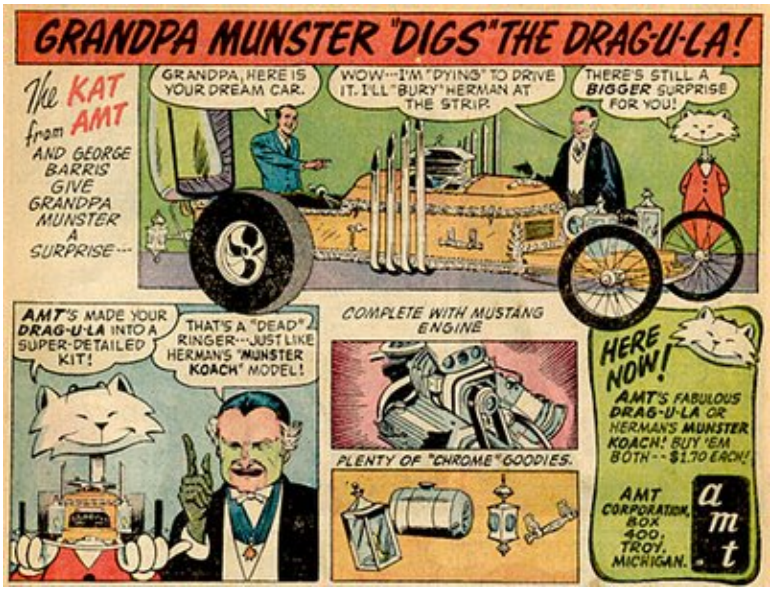
Skip of course later discovered his mutant abilities and changed his name to Magneto.

Next time --The story of Johnny Storm's chance encounter with Chuck Berry.
'Til then--face front, True Believer!

posted by c. martin croker at 2:16 pm | 18 comments

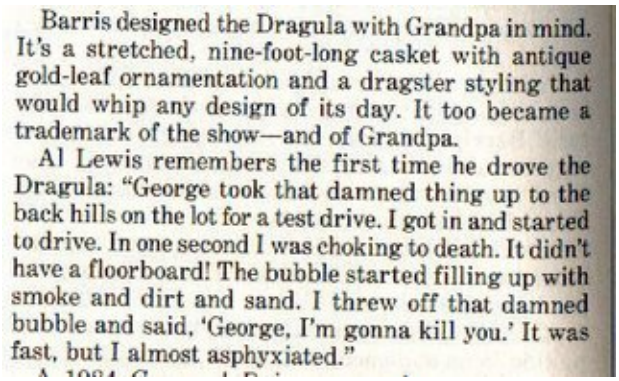
wednesday, may 17, 2006

Grandpa "digs" Drag-u-la


GRANDPA MUNSTER "DIGS" THE DRAG-U-LA!
The KAT from AMT AND GEORGE BARRIS' GIVE GRANDPA MUNSTER A SURPRISE---
GRANDPA, HERE IS YOUR DREAM CAR.
WOW---I'M "DYING" TO DRIVE IT. I'LL "BURY" HERMAN AT THE STRIP.
THERE'S STILL A BIGGER SURPRISE FOR YOU!
AMT'S MADE YOUR DRAG-U-LA INTO A SUPER-DETAILED KIT!
THAT'S A "DEAD" RINGER---JUST LIKE HERMAN'S "MUNSTER KOACH" MODEL!
COMPLETE WITH MUSTANG ENGINE
PLENTY OF "CHROME" GOODIES.
HERE NOW!
AMT'S FABULOUS DRAG-U-LA OR HERMAN'S MUNSTER KOACH! BUY 'EM BOTH---$1.70 EACH!
AMT CORPORATION, BOX 400, TROY, MICHIGAN.
amt

ad by Vince Colletta

The "bigger surprise" the 5 foot asian cat from AMT is hinting at probably concerns the lack of a floorboard.
Looks like Al just got back from the test drive in panel two according to this blurb from the book simply titled "The Munsters"...



Barris designed the Dragula with Grandpa in mind. It's a stretched, nine-foot-long casket with antique gold-leaf ornamentation and a dragster styling that would whip any design of its day. It too became a trademark of the show—and of Grandpa.

Al Lewis remembers the first time he drove the Dragula: "George took that damned thing up to the back hills on the lot for a test drive. I got in and started to drive. In one second I was choking to death. It didn't have a floorboard! The bubble started filling up with smoke and dirt and sand. I threw off that damned bubble and said, 'George, I'm gonna kill you.' It was fast, but I almost asphyxiated."

"Dying" to drive it indeed. (No disrespect meant to the King of Custom Cars!)
More when I get back from Detroit (appropriately)...

posted by c. martin croker at 11:13 pm | 3 comments

tuesday, may 16, 2006

Motor City Meglomania!

For those interested,

I'm getting ready for my first trip to the Detroit area this coming weekend when I visit MOTOR CITY COMICON (MAY 19, 20, 21)! I'll be there drawing and signing autographs all 3 days with my mortal enemy (on tv at least) George "Space Ghost" Lowe. We'll be there with the likes of Adam West, Burt Ward, Tony Dow, Bud Bundy and Seka(?) --and presumably talking ADULT SWIM past and present at some point. Hope to ...eh...see...some of you ...there ...or...something. (Providing ANYONE that reads this that can actually use this information.)

I'll start posting some better stuff next week -- but for now, here's a little tidbit.
As I recall this little gem actually sold on ebay a couple of years ago. (I love shit like this.) Ah, there's nothing quite like outsider cartooning to liven up the kid's room is there? Bugs shows off his giant two headed swamp-chicken. Super. (And what the hell is going on over there with Elmer and Sylvester anyway?) It went really cheap...I shoulda bought it.

posted by c. martin croker at 12:05 am | 3 comments

tuesday, may 02, 2006

No Time --for Sargeant!

Well, nertz. I had intended on on putting up something really cool, weird or controversial by now, but I've been slammed helping out my pal Ward Jenkins with some animated viginettes for the History Channel's R. Lee Ermey show MAIL CALL. (Nice work if you can get it...) As soon as I wrap things up with this gig I'll have something really kick-ass to post.

posted by c. martin croker at 9:45 pm | 0 comments